Interview with

WAYNE DAVIS

At His Decoy Shop

Harkers Island, North Carolina

Photo from Davis Family, Wayne Davis with daughter Staci in his Decoy Shop, Harkers Island

Interviewed by Eva Leasure on June 26, 2024

Transcribed by Eva Leasure

Down East Change Project

Eva Leasure: Okay. This is Eva Leasure, it is June 26, 2024, and this is the Changes Down East Project. With me today is Wayne Davis. And we are at Wayne Davis's Decoy Shop on Harkers Island. Okay, so we're just going to start off with some introductory questions—when were you born, where were you born, and where did you grow up?

WD: I was born in August 11, 1942, and I was born at Beaufort Hospital. And where did I grow up? I grew up in Harkers Island.

EL: Where was the house?

WD: The house we lived in when I first grew up was on Red Hill. My grandfather had moved over from Shackleford, and when they moved over, I think my oldest aunt was born on Shackleford and other than that my mother and all the rest of 'em, the kids were born on the Island. And I do remember that, I've been told that when they moved over on to the Island, he bought ten acres of property, for ten dollars. And my mom and daddy lived there until I was about three or four years old, they built a house where Captain's Choice used to be, it was just to the east'ard of the school, and so we moved there when it got that built, and then we stayed there, right on the rest—until I got married.

EL: Wow! That's amazing!

WD: It is?

EL: [laughter]

WD: [laughter]

EL: Now, you already—you already did answer this question somewhat, but can you just say—who were your parents, where were they from, and what did they do for a living?

WD: My father was Henry Davis, and he was—the both of them, my parents were born on the Island, and he—his father was—owned a store, and he runned the mailboat and different things, my Granddad did, and my father, he built a fish house in 1941. And then he runned the fish house for years and then later on he also got a store—he had a store, and he even had a car lot at one time. And then after that he finally got out of the fish business, 'cause it was getting really bad, and they moved to Daytona and he was the captain of a yacht down there until later on he passed away.

EL: Okay. And your mother?

WD: My mother was born on the Island—I'm not sure about the Island, but Red Hill is where we lived at, and she went to school—she went to college, actually, I'm not sure which one, but a woman's college, and she actually played tennis. I didn't realize my Mama played tennis! But she did. And she was also—she was a nurse at times, and she was a good seamstress, and she just—she could do a little bit of anything.

EL: Okay, wow. Well, can you talk a bit about what it was like growing up around your father's fish house? What work did people do, and what did you do, what did your father do?

WD: I was raised in the fish house, really, because the fish house was built in '41, maybe built in '42, and then I think I started going down there when I could crawl, 'cause I was always to the fish house! And we was always swimming down there days before I actually was old enough to do anything—we stayed in the water until we shriveled up, most of the time. But then, anyway, after I got old enough that I could help a little bit—I thought I was helping—I could drag a box or something, I was always down there working, helping. And I even worked down there for years even when I was going to school. Go down

there afternoons when I get off and work down there, and I just helped—and I couldn't play basketball, because I had to go down there and help my father, because I couldn't practice! I never did like that too much, but I did want to play basketball. But I did play baseball, so I made out all right. But anyway, I runned it when I got out of school, I runned the fish house for a couple—three years myself, until we finally shut it down.

EL: And now, what was that work like—what was a regular day, when you were operating the fish house?

WD: The fish house was—it was more—the fish house was like a middle man. The fishermen would catch the fish and bring them to my father's fish house, and they would unload 'em, pack 'em up with ice, and get 'em iced down, and then we would ship them somewhere to Atlantic, ship them to Atlantic, and they would repack 'em and send 'em to the different places wherever they were going like New York, or the different restaurants, or whatever. So we was just in the middle of it, you know. But the fish house was really a waiting game, you had to wait to see—You never knew when the boats was coming in, you knew they went out that morning and sometime that afternoon they were going to come in, no telling how many fish they'd have, or whatever. So it was—you didn't know how much to get ready for, how much ice to have and all that, but it was kind of a problem with that but you just—When they come in we had to pack 'em up, unload 'em, and ice 'em down, and, like I said, send 'em to where they was going at. And, pretty much, it was just—it was different seasons, different kind of fish different seasons, so you'd be doing different things, you'd have to do different things with different kind of fish, the way you packed 'em, or the way you happen to have them. Like long-hauling, sometime they'd be catching loads of boats of fish where they were, like two days and nights, they would catch so many, and every one of the long haul fish had to be culled out, where the other fish didn't. But the long haul fish, it was different kind of fish mixed together, and when the women was help down there in the fall of the year, and they had to pick all the different ones out and throw 'em and it would take three days, sometimes, to get everything done—And the thing I remember about it, most, it was in the fall during the World Series, and they always—the men would always wanted to hear the World Series so they had the radio going wide open all the time.

EL: Oh my gosh!

WD: But it was different—every day it was different, running the fish house, 'cause you never knew—I enjoyed running the fish house, I really did. If I could have made a living out of it, I probably would have done it. Running a fish house, and working in the water. But, it just got so bad that you just couldn't make a living out of it so I had to do something else.

EL: When did that happen—when did it get so bad that it wasn't a viable option?

WD: It started getting bad there, see, in the 60s, starting getting bad, late 50s and 60s, it started cutting back, and in fact that was the reason Dad, he went and got him a different job, and I tried to run it for a while, but it just—they weren't catching as many fish, and a lot of the fishermen was getting other jobs, and it just wasn't—my father didn't get a salary, and that was—depended on how many fish he had, he—my father—got a penny a pound for whatever went through the fish house. And I remember the last year that I run the fish house that fall was usually was, when my father would make his money 'cause they caught more fish and handled more fish, and the last fall I runned it I bought thirty boxes, three thousand pounds of big spots, and a penny a pound is not a lot of money. And you had to pay your labor and your light bill and all that, you know, so—I went in the Coast Guard, after that.

EL: What would other men do that were your age if they weren't fishing, what were, kind of, the jobs that they took?

WD: It was lot of 'em worked in the boat houses, and it was a lot of jobs at Cherry Point, a lot of the people—the main jobs on Harkers Island was fishing or boatbuilding or some lucky enough to get to Cherry Point where they could get a regular check. And they had individual stores, or they would work somewhere, you know, around in different help—different helpers and stuff. But the main thing was commercial fishing and boatbuilding and Cherry Point, it was a big help, at that time.

EL: Okay. And, you know, before we move on from the fish house—so how many people were employed in the fish house, and kind of how many fishermen would sell to the fish house?

WD: My father had, in different seasons, had different amounts of men that was selling, and probably the biggest season would be—probably six or eight fishermen.

EL: Okay.

WD: Would be the most. And then employees—my father didn't really have employees, he would only have one, like one that was full time, and the rest of the time we had to just get the people that—have different ones that would come in and work so many hours and that way, 'cause you couldn't afford to hire somebody full time, because, you know, you never knew when or how long or whatever. So, but we always had enough help, you know, back there in them days you could—back there in them days, if you wanted somebody to help you turn a boat over or help—you wanted somebody to help you do something, lift something, you'd go to the store. And you—three or four men would be hanging around, and they would say, "Yeah, we'll help you," and you'd go down there and we'd turn the boat over and they'd go back and we bought them a Co-Cola. Now you go to the store you can't get nobody to help you do *nothing*, because there's nobody out there that does that anymore, they don't hang around like that. That's one thing I remember.

EL: So would this be at your father's store, where you would go find people to help?

WD: Any store, that, you know, what you were doing, what part of the Island that they needed the help or whatever. But at my father's store—same way, sometimes, yes.

EL: Okay. And what—do you remember, where, you know, the other fish houses, who owned them, and kind of the other stores on the Island? I know that may take a while to answer.

WD: Yeah, I know all the other fish houses at the time, you want me to name 'em over?

EL: That would be great! [laughter]

WD: Okay. Cecil Nelson was the farthest one to the west, when I first started knowing about working the fish houses, and there was Danny's fish house, and Billy Hamilton's fish house, and my father's fish house, and then there was Albert Lee's fish house, and there was Stacy Davis's fish house, Shell Point fish house, and at one time Clayton Fulcher had one, had a fish house, and then they built one at Rush Point—Elmo Murphy's fish house, and Ellis Yeomans had a scallop and a fish house, and I probably left some out, but it was a bunch of fish houses.

EL: That's amazing. And what about the stores, you know, how many stores were there when you were growing up?

WD: Oh, when I was growing up, there was probably, I don't know, there was eight or ten, I reckon, stores, what they call Mom and Pops, I know one of the stores is still standing, it's not a store anymore, but Tommy Lewis was my uncle, it was down to the east end of the Island. And I got a picture of that where it's snowing. He had that store, my grandfather had a store, my grandfather's half-brother had a store, my aunt had a store, good friend of mine had a store—two different ones—there was Cecil

Nelson's, Cecil Moore's store, there was, I don't know—Dallas's store, Danny Lewis had a store, I can't—there was a bunch of stores. And they may not belong to the same time, but maybe some of them had dropped out or added in, and there's a lot of Mom and Pops where you could go in and get—at one time it was three restaurants at Shell Point, down where the Park Service is. Three different restaurants—when the government took that, down there. So it was a whole lot more than we got now.

EL: Now what were the restaurants at Shell Point?

WD: There was one all the way to the end, my uncle had that, George Parry, and another one was right there where the harbor is, where the ferry goes, it was a store right there and a tackle shop, and there was a restaurant there, too. And the guy that owned that was also the one that built where the Park Service building is, he built that was a motel, when he first built that. And he had a harbor and it had a café there. And across the road was Harker's Lodge, they had—she had a store across there for years.

EL: Okay. Wow.

WD: They had a marina, and stuff. There was a lot going on at Shell Point, at the time. If the Park Service hadn't took the end of the Island, that's where the growth would have been. 'Cause it was so close to the Cape, and that's where it would have been party boats and stuff, it would really have built up down that end, I think.

EL: Do you think it's a good thing that the Park Service took it over?

WD: I didn't in the beginning, but now that I think about it, I feel like that—saves for instance Shackleford Banks. If they hadn't took Shackleford Banks, I've always thought that somebody—they would eventually put a bridge, from Fort Macon or from somewhere, over to Shackleford and then Shackleford would have been like Atlantic Beach. You know, I think it would have come on around, because that's what it looked like it would have done, 'cause it was too much of an opportunity there to not do it—And then with them taking that, it's gonna stay like it, you know, like it was, although there were regulations on what you could do there, and stuff. But I didn't like the part about the camps, 'cause I had a camp there and I didn't like that part—taking the camps away, but, that's a part of it.

EL: Where was your camp?

WD: Where was the camp?

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: Camp was right straight across over here on Shackleford, just to the east'ard of the horse pen. Staci wasn't very old. Staci, my daughter, she was only like two years old, but my other daughters, we would go over there and we had—we could live in it, had it fixed up, had a dock and everything and I'll tell you 'bout Staci, she was all—had one--that she would always sleep with a blanket, T-shirt thing. And we was going over to spend the weekend, and we had the boats loaded up, going over to the shore—forgot about it, she left it at home. "Daddy, I left—" I don't know. I said "Let's get everything out," got everything out of the boat, you know, and I happened to think, I said, "How 'bout sleeping with my T-shirt tonight?" She said okay—she slept with my T-shirt, she never used her blanket no more, she even took it to college with her. And she took it on her honeymoon, I think she's still got it.

EL: How 'bout that! Oh, my gosh!

WD: That was Staci.

EL: So how many people lived over on—or had cabins on Shackleford?

WD: The camps there was just, like weekend things.

EL: Okay.

ED: All of them, it was a bunch of them, I don't know, it was probably like twenty, twenty-five camps over there. But Diamond City over there, they said one time there was 'bout five hundred people, over to Diamond City. It was three cemeteries over there—the one at Diamond City, that's got washed away, some of it's fallen—you used to could see some other gravesites, but you can't no more, that's all gone—but there's two graveyards down in the woods, down towards the west'ard end of Shackleford. Wade Shore, they call that, I guess.

EL: Wow. Oh my gosh. And this is kind of going back to, talking about the fish house, when—you mentioned kind of when, but when did it close and what happened to the building and the area after it closed?

WD: My father's fish house closed, and then—I think Monroe Gaskill—but I'm not sure now, I can't think of the name of the guy that built another fish house there where that one was but it wasn't out on the water, it was on the shore. Monroe Gaskill, I think it was. Anyway, he built a fish house there, and started fishing —it come back a little bit, at that time, fishing was doing better—and then Clayton Fulcher was the one that my father bought for, had that tore down and he built one to Shell Point. And then when the Park Service took that down there, Clayton bought the one that was Monroe's. Gaskill's. And so that he—Clayton—wound up back there, but it wasn't out on the water, it was on the shore. So—and then eventually all the fish houses just started closing and it got so bad now we don't have no fish houses, now we got a harbor up before you get to the bridge, and if they catch any fish now they just call and a truck comes to pick them up.

EL: Wow. So big change.

WD: Big change. Yep, that's a big change. It's not like it was—that fish house, tell you that, down there. But anyway. That's one of the reasons I got that—I wanted Stevie to do that for me because it's hard to tell somebody how it was but that kind of shows you.

EL: Can you talk, actually, a little bit more about getting Stevie—Stevie Lewis?

WD: Yep. Stevie Lewis.

EL: To make the model—can you talk about that?

WD: For years, I always—we owned a store, we owned Captain Henry's, and we had it fixed up really nice and I had some displays, I was just the kind that didn't throw anything away, and wanted to have old stuff, old pictures and stuff, and I wanted a display of the fish house, you know, so people would know, and I finally talked him into doing one for me, told him what I wanted, and he spent like a winter on it, he made model boats, pretty much all he ever did, but I talked him—worked on it the whole winter, just about—working on the fish house for my father. And he didn't have a picture or anything of it, he lived right there on the side of it, and he got it very accurate. So he built that for me. And then a couple years later I talked him into building a boat house and his family—his father, and brothers—they always worked in a boat house, so he pretty much knew that, he got that thing pat down, too. So he did that one and then later on he did the scallop house for me.

EL: So, which—you said your father's fish house, and then was it the Lewis Boat House that's shown in the model?

WD: The model?

EL: Uh-huh.

WD: The model was not a certain one.

EL: Okay.

WD: It's like—to me, it's more like the one that was East Bay Boat Works. But I can't say exactly it's the one it was, because it's got a lot of all the different, you know, how they would be, you know. But we can't say it was a certain one, but it's pretty close to all—you know, what they did. And the scallop house, same way. All the scallop houses, like the one we have there, it's pretty much was built the same way—I can't say that's a certain one, but it's the way they were, pretty close.

EL: Okay. That's neat. And when did you decide to restore the model?

WD: To get him to do it?

EL: Well, after you got him to do it, did you—were "The Landing" exhibit at the museum—did you have to add to it?

WD: Oh yeah. I had them in our store,

EL: Okay.

WD: Captain Henry's, for years. And then when we sold the store, I put them in storage. And I had them in storage for three, going on almost four years. And I just was thinking all along that they can't stay in storage, they're too nice to be in storage, they'll be ruined, so I started cleaning them up, you know, and then I talked to Karen and Pam, and they hadn't ever seen them. And I got 'em to stop by here and look at 'em and told 'em—"Is there any way we can put them in the museum?" And they said "Yeah, let's do it." So then I started cleaning them up, getting them better, and it was a couple months before we put them down there, but I got everything cleaned up, and it's pretty important. And that's where they need to be. Because that's the way—a museum is for the way it used to be. And that's the way it used to be. Yep. And it's hard to show somebody a picture and tell them, but that's pretty good about explaining it.

EL: Can you talk about what Staci's role was and how she helped you kind of in the fruition of having the exhibit there, and the Community Night?

WD: Yes. I talked to her in the beginning, and she helped me make arrangements with Karen and them about what we had to do and where to put it and all that and stuff, so she was very involved in that. And she did all the prints and posters and all that stuff—Pam did some of it, but she did all the writing, getting them ready and stuff for me. She knew all about that, you know. So she's helped me all along—"when we're gonna do this," or "when we're gonna do that"—she was always there to help me. Yep.

EL: Oh my gosh.

WD: I probably wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for Staci, 'cause it was a lot of work just getting them ready and down there, but they are—I'm glad, very glad I done it. I think the people on the Island, the older people, that remembers how it was, not too many of them left, but really appreciated it and maybe the newer people coming, you know, like it too.

EL: I loved it, it's beautiful. And it's so cool.

WD: Yeah. It just—it just takes you back, like I can walk down and look at that fish house and mess around inside of it and all the scales and all that stuff– and I've had a whole everything in there, I've

done it, you know? And it's—it's like it was when I did it, you know? It just brings me back, like it was. 'Cause that's where I lived at, down there on that fish house. I almost drowned down there, one time.

EL: Can you talk about that?

WD: I can talk about that, but it was—I wasn't very old, I was, maybe—I couldn't swim, probably four or five years old, and I was out on the dock, and where the boats come in and tie up on the dock it was what we called a steamer hole, it was whole lot deeper there and it would do it for the boat and we called it steamer hole like if a steamer, big boat had been there—but anyway—steamer hole—and I was out on the dock, and my father was inside talking to some other men, and I fell overboard. And I can remember a little bit, I remember going down and popping back up a couple times, and I almost remember like, "This is it." And when I went down and I heard a splash, and then my father had heard me hollering, and jumped overboard and got me. But if he hadn't heard me I wouldn't be here. We wouldn't have a fish house down there.

EL: Wow.

WD: But it was close, though, 'cause I remember him taking his wallet, taking stuff out of his wallet, you know, it was wet, you know that kind of stuff. I remember a little bit of that because I wasn't really that old. I wasn't really old when I've done some crazy things. You know. How you gonna learn if you don't do it?

EL: Yeah, and you know—you're talking about what your father did for a living, and what you—you worked at the fish house, you operated it, but can you talk about, you know, the jobs that you had afterwards, and kind of, when you had them?

WD: Yeah, well. I talked about—well, when we first moved in the house on the Island, when I got big enough, my father had a store—where the store was, right on the side of our house, our house was next to the school, and there was a store, like, next to that, between that and Ferry Dock Road. And that was there—when we built the house, when Daddy built the house, that was there, and it was being used at that time. When it was first put there, it was put there for, I understand, for the Odd Fellows' Lodge. And then later on, the power company used it for their—what time they were building the new power company, and the new building, they stayed there. And I remember they had a lot of light poles and stuff back there, and I remember playing back there on the poles. And then after they went down there my father opened it back up and sold gas and groceries and you know, all that kind of stuff. And then he got a car lot behind it. And he had like fifteen, eighteen cars back there at that time. He didn't sell many cars, though. [laughter] But he had 'em back there and I would—I'd always be messing with them, and I had one, I know, it was a '49 Ford, and I took her and waxed her and cleaned her, and that was my car. I wasn't about thirteen, fourteen years old, and I would go down—I was driving when I was twelve years old, I could go anywhere I wanted to. Maybe against the law, I don't know, but I'm a liar too. But anyway, he had that, and then—What I hated about the store more than anything else was that Sundays, people stopped and got their ice cream—dip ice cream. And he had that ice cream so hard you could hardly get it out with a chisel.

EL: [laughter]

WD: And I remember trying to get that out of there and not wanting to be there, but. But he had run—and then after—when I graduated, I actually—the store had been closed at that time for a while, my father had gone to Florida with Mama, and I actually opened that store back up and put a jukebox in there, and fixed it for the young people to hang out. And I runned it for a year, and then after that year I got another guy, we called him Faye Jones, Jr., his name was Lafayette Faye Jones, Jr., we called him

Faye Junior—anyway, he runned it, he was a good dancer and stuff, everybody liked him. And he runned it two or three, three or four years after that. And then I runned the fish house, after that. So I kept it going for a little while. So—oh yeah! After that job, I was running the fish house, and I got married in '63, and—I thought we were gonna starve to death. I went—the fish house wasn't doing anything, so I done some scalloping, and I remember the last day I went scalloping, I caught enough scallops to open eight gallons. And I hired Miss Sarah Thomas, was her name, this older lady that lived behind me, she opened them for me. And I give her a dollar a gallon to open 'em, and I sold 'em, I got two dollar and a half a gallon for 'em. And last year I bought a gallon for a hundred dollars. And I got two dollar and a half a gallon for 'em, I had to give her a dollar of it, so I said, "I got to do something different than this." So I went to the Coast Guard. But it was *nothing* to do at that time around here, I just had to do something. I went in the Coast Guard, not for making a career out of it, but I loved the Coast Guard, and I wouldn't take nothing for it, I always thought that when you go in the service, you learn a lot, you learn how to take care of yourself. But after I got out of the Coast Guard, I went to work with—I can tell you a little bit about this. I worked different places, I worked at a veneer plant a little time, and I had different jobs. And one time before I got married, when I first got out, my parents went and moved to California. And hauled me out all the way out to California. And I was dating at the time, but we weren't married. And I didn't want to go. But anyway, we went out there, and I had been out there about, I don't know, two or three weeks, three or four weeks, and I told them "I'm going back home!" We took the car. And they said, "We can't go back home!" I said, "What do you mean, we can't?" I said, "I can!" So anyway, they all had it packed up and we come back home. And I remember coming through Albuquerque, and we were gonna stop there to get gas, we had left that morning, and we stopped to get gas and spend the night, and the people there said, "You better not stop. The last ones stopped here had to stay a week." So we drove all that day, all that night, all the next day, and the next night, twelve o'clock, we stopped in Columbia, South Carolina. That was a *long* trip. But anyway, we got home, then I went in the Coast Guard, after I got out of the Coast Guard, I was gonna—I had a job at Cherry Point. And I was riding down the road and a friend of mine stopped me on the road and said, "What are you gonna be doing?" I said, "I'm going to Cherry Point in the morning." He said, "The boy up there to the power company just quit!" I said, "Okay," I said "I'll go up there" he said "You ought to go up there and talk to them." So I did, I went up there and talked to the manager, and I went to work next morning, and worked with 'em forty years. We came into the water company, and the power company for forty years. So that's pretty much what I done. And then what time I did that, I was always—afternoons I was either setting crab pots or I was shrimping—I had two jobs. 'Cause I was always doing something on the side, 'cause you had to do something to get by, really—even with the power company, wasn't making a lot of money, I went there and get my—it was a dollar an hour, dollar and a quarter, but you had to do something. 'Cause if something broke down, you had to have a little bit of extra money to pay for it. And every time I make a little extra money, there'd be something break down. And I'd say, "Lana, be glad we got something to pay for it." So, she'd say, "Okay." Anyway, that's really about it. And I've always carved decoys, all my life. I carved the first one when I was fifteen. And I just carved some when I was hunting, but not a lot when I was hunting, but—I kept right on when I was in the Coast Guard, I'd carve some, I'd always have one in my pocket. And then when I got out the Coast Guard and worked in the power company I always started carving. I was still carving, I sold a bunch of decoys to a lady in Swansboro, sold 'em through her shop in the beginning, and then I got into a show over in Old Armory behind Kentucky Fried Chicken, they had a show over there, and I got in that show. That was my first big show. Then they went to the Civic Center, went over there for three or four years and then we started the guild and then we started our festival, put that on.

EL: So I think I'm gonna cycle back a bit.

WD: Yeah, I'm messing you up, aren't I?

EL: No, no, not at all! Not at all! [laughter] You're giving a good overview! When you joined the Coast Guard, where were you stationed?

WD: I went to boot camp in Cape May, New Jersey, then I was stationed in Portsmouth, Virginia, on a buoy tender, and I was there a year, and a friend of mine was stationed to the Cape. And, at that time, I reckon it's still the same way, you been somewhere a year, and somebody else had been somewhere a year, you could trade—what they call a "mutual." You could swap. So he talked to that boy, and he was from New York, and he wanted to trade, he didn't like it over there. And you know I wanted to go there! So we traded, and I went over there two weeks after he had been—the one I traded, he went on an ice breaker. So I was over there a year and then after that I was stationed at Fort Macon for eighteen months, and then I went to McCulloch in Wilmington. And then I got out.

EL: Wow. So what years were those?

WD: What now?

EL: What years were you in the Coast Guard?

WD: I was in the year—in the Coast Guard from '65 to '69.

EL: Wow.

WD: That's when I went to work with the power company, '69.

EL: Now you've told me before, and I'd like to hear you talk about this—can you talk about the trees on the Cape?

WD: When we was to the Cape the Boy Scouts was coming over, did come over and they brought a load of trees—little seeds of the pine trees. And they was gonna stay over there the whole weekend and plant trees. And they started planting—the weather got really, really bad. And they couldn't come out, I don't think they finished up much even 'cause the weather got really bad but they didn't come back that Monday, or that next day, Sunday, I guess that was when they—and so they left and never did come back and so us Coast Guard boys planted trees for two or three months, [laughter] in between what we were doing we were planting pine trees, not thinking that any of them would live. I mean, you don't plant a tree in the middle of sand dunes, you know. But surely enough they did. Boy Scouts were the ones that took credit for it, they're the ones that did it, really, they were the ones that done it, but we helped them a whole lot.

EL: So what was the goal for bringing the trees over there—why'd they do that?

WD: I think it was just kind of help protect it from blowing away, that stuff, that sand and stuff, you know—where they at is protecting the beaches and stuff, in hurricanes.

EL: Do you think it worked?

WD: I think it did. I think it's helped. It's still growing over there; news ones are coming up. It's amazing how you see them pine trees, and it was nothing over there until the trees were planted, nothing but bushes, you know. But anyway.

EL: Um—

WD: But I didn't mention this here, about my store, that my father, he paid for me and the fish market, when I was twelve years old, it was in 1954, same year of Hurricane Hazel, he built my little store there, and I had a little fish market. And I used that for a while, and I got a picture of that in the exhibit down

there, showing—because that was the same year that they had the hurricane down, it was so bad and it tore some of my father's fish house up. And I'll tell you something about that, too. Lot of people don't know this, but people would say, "Why didn't the hurricane tear that fish house up? Why didn't it?" And they were smart enough, what they would do was, they would take about every third plank up out of the floor, they had them so they could take them off the dock, take them up and all the doors, everything in the fish house so the wind would blow through it, and the tide would come through it instead of beating it down. So that was one of the ways they'd protect it and save their fish house. But anyway, that was the bad one—Hurricane Hazel was probably the worst one that I remember 'cause it was the whole state, it was so big it went inland, it was, you know. Everybody talks about Hurricane Hazel.

EL: Were you here for it, or did your family leave?

WD: Oh, we stayed here. We was always here.

EL: What was that like?

WD: We had to stay here, I mean, if something broke down you had to go fix it. I remember my uncle had a store across the road from us—[phone rings]

EL: [laughter] You're talking about your uncle, and his store.

WD: My uncle and my aunt had a store across the road where the Fish Hook is now. My father had that store, too, at one time. I was real little, young, when they had that, and my grandfather had that store where the Fish Hook is. But anyway, they had a store at the time and we was standing in my father's store across the road, and the big windows blowed out and I remember going over there, some men over there and they had a piece of plywood, hoisted it up there in the middle of the hurricane. It was tearing everything up. It was really, it was real bad. And I'll tell you something else before forgetting it, but the people on the Island didn't have many cars and stuff back then in the old days, it was very few families that had cars, in fact I remember one time my Uncle Walter he won a car, and that was the talk of the town, it was a used car, he won it on a game of something on the radio, you know? And that was the talk of the town. He won that car, and it was an old car. But they had a bus that would run, like weekends, like Saturdays, for the people that didn't have cars they would go on the bus and they would go to Beaufort to get their groceries. And she would stop there to my father's store, that was one of the places she would stop. And people would come and they would go, and I had a dog, Sandspur was his name, our dog, that was my best friend. Anyway, he laid there, when that bus come back it run over and killed him. So I ain't forgot about that. But the reason I'm bringing that up is everybody didn't have cars, so if they—to get to town you'd have to go on the bus that they, you know, had, there were different ways to get—Now everybody, if there's five people in the family, they've got five cars. Back in those days you were lucky if every fifth family had one car.

EL: Oh my gosh.

WD: It's just changed so much, you know.

EL: When did you buy your first car?

WD: Now, I was one of the lucky ones, see, 'cause I worked for my father, and I didn't get paid. I didn't want to get paid, I didn't get nothing, I just, didn't get paid. But I done it. And when I was in the—I was a junior, my Mama come to the door one day of the school, and she said—knocked on the door, or whatever, teacher went over there and she said, "Wayne's father wants to see him." Well I knew something was wrong, 'cause my mother never—back there in them days, parents didn't go to the

school. Anyway, I went out there and I said "Dad, what's the matter?" He said "Nothing's the matter." He said "How do you like your car?" He had bought me a '56 Ford, white '56 Ford, I said "Yeah, I kinda like it pretty good!" So I stayed home with him next day and went to sign the papers in Vanceboro. And what time I was in there signing the papers, I was outside on the car lot looking around, and there was a black one there just like her. Like the white one. And when he come out, I said "Dad, I'd rather have that black one." And he said, "We just got through signing the papers!" The guy said "I can change them," so I come home in the black one, I kept the white one one day! But I was the only one at school, junior and a senior, that had a car.

EL: Wow! Now, was this at Smyrna?

WD: Smyrna.

EL: Okay.

WD: Yep. I went to school to Beaufort in ninth grade, I did something that most people wouldn't have done. I didn't want to go, but my sister went there, and my Mama wanted me to go there. So I went there, in ninth grade, I had to thumb back and forth to Beaufort. I hitched a ride pretty good if there was somebody that was going that way, I could get a ride that morning, but coming back I was always having to try to thumb home. And it was hard. And I'd been out with football, and I went to every practice, and when we had—when they started catching fish long haul fishing in the fall, they caught a load of fish and I had to stop, so I didn't go to the ball game. [laughter] I got out of the practice 'cause it was hard. Anyway, but that's the time I've probably told you about it—a little bit about it, the time I killed—we skinned the swell toads. Remember me ever telling you about that?

EL: Maybe!

WD: Maybe? About the puffers?

EL: Can you talk more about that?

WD: Yes, I can, that was something we done. Anyway, there was a guy that worked with my father, called him Mississippi, he was a colored guy, he was from Mississippi, his name was James Archie, but he worked with my father four or five years. In fact he stayed in my little shop after we closed it, he had a little room in there. But anyway, in the spring of the year, that's when they would catch them things—I didn't know what a puffer was, we called them swell toads, or blow toads. Anyway, they'd catch a load of them for about two weeks. And my father would save—we would skin 'em out, you know, get the meat out. And my father would save around—I wanted it, so when I got home from school, we'd go down there and work till twelve o'clock nights, and me and him, he cut for me and I'd skin 'em, we skinned sixteen thousand pounds in one week. They'd skin about a fourth, there'd be four thousand pounds of meat, we got four cent a pound. So we made a hundred and sixty dollars, and we split it, we got eighty dollars apiece, and I bought a bedroom suit with it. Fifteen years—I was in the ninth grade, I don't think nobody else ever skinned sixteen thousand pounds of swell toads. I counted five days, to about twelve o'clock nights.

EL: That's crazy!

WD: I still hate 'em. People ask, "Do you like 'em? Do you fix 'em?" I hate them things!

EL: [laughter] But you got money off them!

WD: But we called them puffers—a hundred and sixty—that was a lot of money back there in them days! I bought a bedroom suit with mine. Eighty dollars.

EL: Wow.

WD: But that was just something I did. But anyway.

EL: Yeah, so you're talking a lot about how, you know, you grew up on the Island, your memories. But what are the biggest changes that you've seen on the Island since then, can you—is there any way you can say "Well this change happened this decade or that decade"?

WD: Biggest change I seen is—When I was growing up, we talked about it earlier. How many stores and different places you could go, and restaurants, and we don't have any of that now. We have one service station now, I can remember my father had his service station and three other service stations. And there was five or six, I reckon seven or eight, now—you know what you got. So all of the businesses have pretty much gone except just a couple. And I think that that's one of the changes. I'll tell you—here's another change, too. I think about the prices, people complain about prices, and stuff. But let me tell you. When I was—when I was in the Coast Guard, I was stationed at Portsmouth [Virginia], they opened up some property on Bayview Drive, and they were gonna sell—they opened up one section of it, it was a dirt road. And a friend of mine had bought a lot. He paid a thousand—he bought two lots, a thousand dollars a lot, two thousand dollars. And we decided we was gonna get some so we bought two lots. It was thirty dollars a month each lot, sixty dollars. That was the hardest sixty dollars I ever had to pay, when you get two hundred dollars a month, Coast Guard. But, we had to do it. But the guy let us have it on time, Earl Davis, on time, he didn't charge no interest, and if you couldn't make a payment he added it on the end. So you could handle it that way, you know. But the reason I said that—a thousand dollars a lot, I could've bought all of Bayview Drive for fifty thousand dollars. Now, you couldn't buy it, I mean one lot cost you seventy-five, eighty-thousand, or more. But anyway. My neighbor there, he built a house on his lot. And then when I worked with the power company, I had that land, and I wanted to build a house. So I was gonna build it myself, 'cause I helped him build his, and he didn't have no labor, I wasn't gonna have no labor. And I figured ten thousand dollars would do it. And I said "Where's ten thousand dollars—where you gonna get ten thousand dollars?" I paid two thousand dollars for my land, that's more than two thousand dollars, ten thousand dollars, but I had a friend in Beaufort. And I asked him what to do, and he said, "How much you want?" I said "Ten thousand dollars, I'm gonna build a house on my land." He said, "That's no problem." So he worked that out for me. Anyway, I got—paid two thousand dollars for the land, I got ten thousand dollars. The house is still there on Bayview. I don't know if you've ever seen it. We moved in that house, finished the outside with the fireplace and everything. Moved in that house for ten thousand dollars. Piece of land across the road over here, she's already got a million and they haven't put no wood on it yet. So that's one thing. Take the harbor, we dug a harbor up in there. Seven hundred feet harbor through the marsh, you could do it at that time, thirty foot wide, it branched off on each side a hundred feet, 'cause we had two hundred foot lots. Hundred foot that way, hundred feet that way. Made a tee out of it, fifty foot wide. And we got to dig it out, and we talked to 'em about digging it, we hadn't done it yet. And he said "I'll dig it for you for two thousand dollars." Well, this was a long time ago, two thousand dollars is not very much now. And I couldn't come up with a thousand. Bill could, 'cause he worked at Cherry Point, but I said, "I can't come up with a thousand dollars." I come up with six hundred dollars some kind of way and I told Bill, I said, "I can get six hundred, if you'll pay six hundred." So he called Wallace Leonard, the one that was gonna dig it out with a drag line, and said "We'll give you twelve hundred. That's all we come up with." He said "I got nothing else to do now, I'll do it for twelve hundred dollars." He dug all that out for twelve hundred dollars. But Bill, my neighbor there, fifteen years ago, checked with a guy about cleaning it out, not digging it, but just go down there and make it a bit deeper, clean it out—he was gonna charge us sixty-five thousand dollars to clean it out. And we had the whole thing dug out for twelve hundred dollars.

EL: Oh my gosh. [laughter]

WD: So I mean you see the changes?

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: And people—and I don't blame the people for moving, the people that are retiring out of New York, and different places, then they come down here and they fall in love with the property down here, they just love the water, but they just love the Cape, the boats and stuff—but that's not the only thing that drove up the prices, because it's that way everywhere, it's not just Harkers Island. You go anywhere and it's building up the same way. You know? Some people blame it, say, "them dingbatters," but I look at it a different way, the Indians were here before we were, so we dingbatters too, I think, you know? But anyway. And I think that is the main reason to me, it's just—And it's running out of land over here, really. We don't have that much land, no more. They're gonna have to go somewhere else. But they going Down East though, they're going Down East. But—I reckon I had something to do with it, if you stop and think about it, it's a lot more people now account of that Decoy Festival. And I don't know if it's a lot of them people don't come here and fall in love with it and come back! [laughter] So I can't say a whole lot, you know! I got to thinking about that, you'd be surprised how many people come that weekend and look around. So it's my fault.

EL: I wouldn't say that! [laughter]

WD: I ain't gonna be liked now!

EL: I disagree with that. [laughter]

WD: But anyway. You don't need to know nothing else, do you? You've run out of questions?

EL: But, no, I haven't, I've got a lot more to ask you, sorry!

WD: That's okay! No problem.

EL: [laughter] Well actually, when was Bayview put in? When was that drive first built and when did the houses come in?

WD: I went to work with the power company in '69, and we built that house in the early 70s, about '71, '72, we were working on that house I think when Staci was born. So that was—and then it just come just a little ways, it was dead, and then later on they kept digging and making, and then they brought that dirt road and then they paved it. So it started—the first house was Henry Willis, down to the other end, but there's a little bit of pavement there, so it was probably—when it really started—early 70s, probably.

EL: And prior to that, where did everyone live on the Island?

WD: Before that?

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: On the main road, or Cape Lookout, the one that cuts through, or Old Ferry Dock Road, pretty much all the roads. And even down here to Shell Point, at that time, it was nothing down there but the main road. All back there where the museum is, and everything, all in there, but it was nothing in there. Every way to the Willow Pond, it was just—nothing. Some houses on the main road, you know. But nothing in the back of the Island.

EL: So you went to the Willow Pond—what were you doing in the Willow Pond?

WD: We had a camp back there, it was five or six of us had a camp back there, and we'd go out there like weekends and just have a good time, just walk around looking for stuff and go down to the shore, looking for old decoys or old anything washed up. Just went down there—we cooked out there. We had—one boy—I've told this story a hundred times, one winter we were taking something to eat, everybody brought a can of beans. Pork and beans. And he brought a can of green peas. And we cooked it all together and they were green and we called it the "gangrene beans."

EL: [laughter]

WD: So, we'd just go out there, and, you know. Different things like that. We had a car club on the Island one time. I was only fifteen years old, I was the youngest one. We called it the car club, little things like that you know we would do, I still got my card in my pocket. When I was fifteen years old.

EL: Wow.

WD: I'm the only one left, I bet you. 'Cause everybody else is dead. But anyway, it was always doing something. Riding bicycles. I had—I'll tell you about bicycles nowadays, and the way it was—you don't see no bicycles no more. If you see a bicycle, no young kid on it. It's an older person going out there and trying to lose some weight, or you know. Really and truly, most of them got mopeds, or golf carts, or four wheelers, whatever. But, when I was growing up, I was twelve, I reckon I was about twelve years old, I got a new bicycle, a five star Columbia, I used that bicycle five, four years. Every winter I'd take her to pieces, clean her up and use her. Now you get a bicycle it won't be two weeks she'll be laying out there in the yard. The kids don't do the stuff we did, I mean we rode bicycles, or we made up games, nowadays, they're on them things [holds up phone]. Really, truly, I mean, really! I mean, we played hide and seek, or we would climb trees, or we would shoot marbles or do something or swim in the summertime. I don't even think I had a one pair of shoes in the summertime, I used that in Sunday school. I was barefooted. I know Mama was—I know I wanted—we stayed in the water so long, we get what we call 'em salt water boils, little boils you'd get once—I don't know if you've ever heard of them –

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: We'd get them, we stayed out in the salt water so long! And we'd get there, and Mama—she'd take a sheet, tie it up, white, you know, and bandage it up, and I would have four or five places on me bandaged up and I'd go out there and people'd think I was in a fight!

EL: [laughter]

WD: But I lost!

EL: So where on the Island would you—would all the young people go? Where were your spots? You said the landing, or the shore, and then Willow Pond—was that it, or were there other places?

WD: Had bunch of them stores, like I said, Mom and Pops and stuff like that, and really, whatever neighborhood—we played ball, it was two places on the Island had a field, behind somebody's house, you know, and we'd just go out there and we played baseball, a couple different places, if somebody had a bat that was taped up, or a ball, we didn't have that new stud, but, we was always doing something, you know, playing ball, or getting together, swimming, most of the time in the water. Summer, in the water. I can remember when I had a boat down there by the post office down on the shore where my father's fish house was, and I remember on the east'ard side of it was a whole stack of them old decoys that they used for hunting, and I remember having them one of them for an anchor for

my little skiff. And nowadays they're worth all kinds of money but it was just stacked up there, you know. So they hunted, and stuff like that, you know. See, I hunted a lot, we'd go hunting. You could take a dollar and buy five gallons of gas! I remember my father sold gas, and I remember it was—regular was average between seventeen cent a gallon, high test was thirty cent, and I remember one time they had a gas war, the different stations would try and get lower, and it went down to eighteen cent a gallon. If we got five gallons of gas, where'd we get the money? We'd go bottling, I've gone bottling many times, you'd get a penny a piece for the bottles, scrap up enough to get us some gas. Like now, pack of cigarettes! Eight, nine dollars a pack! I mean, when I was in the Coast Guard, I bought 'em a dollar a carton! I mean, you know, when we'd go off shore somebody'd get 'em a dollar a carton! Eight dollars and something a pack! Crazy!

EL: That is.

WD: Yeah. But, Staci there, she'd go shrimping with me nights. She was my partner, she'd go with me. I'd take in that boat, was a twenty-six foot boat, take it out there, and I'd set my net out, she'd go out there with me and set my net out, I had a little place set up there a little bed thing and she'd go up there and play, you know, and she'd get on the CV radio and talk—one feller, she talked to him and he called her "Staci Lucy Doctor Boondocker Davis." [laughter] But she would talk to him, and she enjoyed stuff like that. I remember one time, I went there one evening, and I got mad, I went out there one evening and got my shrimp, just before dark, put my net out, hadn't eat nothing, and I had a can of Vienna sausage. And I put my net out and was sitting back there with my drink, had my Vienna sausage, opened them, and was gonna dump the juice out, so I did and dropped 'em! And I was starving to death. I didn't know whether to jump overboard and get them and let my boat go or what! I've always been mad about that Vienna sausage! [laughter]

EL: [laughter] I'm sure some fish was very happy!

WD: I don't—I would have killed 'em.

EL: [laughter]

WD: Yeah. But I was always doing something—crab pot, and stuff.

EL: Were you selling it?

WD: Oh, yeah.

EL: Okay.

WD: Yeah, I sold. Yeah, I'd sell shrimp. The most I ever got for a shrimp—I got fifty cent a pound, one time. But most of the time they was a quarter. I got a quarter a pound—now they're four or five dollars a pound.

EL: Now where were you selling it—to fish houses?

WD: Fish houses, mm-hmm.

EL: Okay.

WD: I set crab pots, too. I set—I fished a hundred crab pots, every evening, after I come home, most time it was night when I got home. A crab got me by the knuckle one time, I thought it was gonna kill me. I ain't lying—it was trying to bite me on the finger—it had my knuckle, and I could not get him off, I

held him overboard, helped him turn loose, I done whatever I could done, I cussed him a little bit, done everything! I said, "Only one way to get rid of you!" I put him down and stomped on him!

EL: [laughter]

WD: And I think he locked on harder then. But I took my screwdriver and got it off. And I remember I had to take my boat and run my boat in and the wind keep passing out! I mean he like to kill me, that crab did! But they are my favorite thing to eat, though, crabs.

EL: So where would you go fishing?

WD: We lived on Bayview, and I would go out in the bay.

EL: Okay.

WD: In the Straits, I guess they call it back there, Straits.

EL: And you caught a lot?

WD: Yeah! Times I did, mm-hmm. Yeah, times—I done real good, crabbing, sometimes. And it come in handy, too, making a little money. You ever seen this kind of bread, the biscuits they make, and it's lacquered or something—they make 'em shine, you know? I went home one evening, starving to death, Lana was gone and she had there on that counter there the prettiest bread that'd just been cooked shiny. And I grabbed one of them biscuits and headed to my boat, took a bite and said, "She didn't do a very good job on that," took another, "That's one of them artificial biscuits!" I told her about it when I got home, I said, "You like to poison me!" [laughter]

EL: [laughter]

WD: Took a bite and sat there, same biscuit. But, yeah. I'm sure that I've left something out, but I don't know what it is.

EL: Well when did you stop fishing?

WD: You may not believe what I'm gonna tell you—I stopped fishing when I got rid of my bigger boat, you know, I got a little boat now, that's all I got. I went yesterday, I'm foolish, this is how foolish I am, I went yesterday, I've had my license, commercial license, since I was eighteen years old. I went yesterday and renewed my license—four hundred dollars. Four hundred eighteen dollars. I don't want to get rid of 'em. And I've not been fishing in years.

EL: How much would the license cost when you first started fishing?

WD: We didn't have any. It wasn't very much. Wasn't like it is now.

EL: So how has fishing changed since your father's fish house, and all that time back then?

WD: Well, the rules and laws has got so strict. Right now, they can't—if you're a hook and liner or a commercial fishermen, you can't catch one flounder. I mean, they've changed the rules so bad they're trying to get rid of everything. Years back they changed the speckled trout, that you could catch seventy-five speckled trout. But how is a boat with two or three men aboard it going to go fish and you catch seventy-five fish, and they can't pay their gas bill? So they made it, somethings they'd not closed it, but they made it so you can't do it, you know? So the rules—the laws and stuff has really hurt commercial fishing a lot, what you can get. They even got a limit on bluefish now, I never thought there'd be a limit on bluefish. But they still go shrimping in the big thing, they catch—sometimes they'll go in their boats,

and they'll catch sea mullets and trout and mulleting. But I don't even know what the rules are on them they're liable to be changed on them too. But they're just making it so strict you can't do it, make a living out of it.

EL: When did they first start putting in all those regulations?

WD: They always—well, I won't say always, I know in the past twenty years or longer you've had to buy your license, your fishing license. But how much you could catch of certain things or the area you can't fish, stuff like that, they've been doing that a long time, it just gets worse and worse all the time. Every year it seems like it's something different they're closing. And they say it's because it's tearing up the grass! But I don't understand it, because it's more shrimp caught this past year in Pamlico Sound that have ever been caught there, and it's not hurting that grass—if it is, the shrimp are still there! So you know—and they was talking one time about closing that! Commercial fishing nowadays, it's—if I could have, like I say, if I could have had a career and made any money out of it, that's what I would have done. Commercial fishing or fish housing. I enjoyed doing it 'cause it was something different every day. But—it just got so you couldn't depend on it, you couldn't have a payment out of commercial fishing. It's still three that did real good, but they had—they were good fishermen, and they had equipment and stuff that they had got that they could do much of anything, if a certain kind of fish come in they could change their nets, you know, so. And they were taking them, pretty good, but on average, lot of fishermen didn't do very good. See all them boats up there, sometimes they'll go out, and they'll have a good day or something, but not an everyday thing. I don't know.

EL: And do you think it's—is the big part the regulations, or is it, you know, something about changing fish stocks, is that, anything?

WD: I think the regulations is the biggest part of it

EL: Okay

WD: 'cause I—I know used to, when I fished a little bit, you go out and you go to the Cape fishing, and it would be twenty-five, thirty other boats out there. Now, if one boat goes out there fishing, they can't—it's hard to find them! Because if you had twenty-five boats, somebody would find them and everybody would go where it was at! Now one boat could ride around all day and not see nothing—don't mean there's no fish out there. So I think that's had a lot to do with it, that it's not as much—not many people looking for 'em. 'Cause I got to believe there's still fish out there.

EL: They're still there, they're just—

WD: I believe—I might be wrong, but I can't believe that they all just disappeared, you know? But—scalloping's just about gone, they opened it the year before last, not this year, but last year they opened it for just a little while, couple days, but they didn't even open it this year, so they can't scallop. And, oystering. The only thing to say with oystering is they're raising oysters now. That's what's taking place with the oysters. So if they wind up, it'll probably be taking place of everything. I know lot of the restaurants now are serving catfish. But it's not a bad place to live though. Me and my wife have both been born and raised right here and I wouldn't trade it for nothing. I been to California, and I been—I been somewhere. We used to live in Daytona. I lived in Daytona at one time and I worked with the milk company. She worked at a clothing place, I come home one day and said, "Darling, let's go back to the Island," she said, "I've been waiting for you to say it." So we headed back.

EL: What do you think is the difference between Harkers Island and everywhere else that makes you want to come back?

WD: It's heaven. [laughter] You can't beat—Harkers Island, the way I look at it, and I'm getting older now, I don't take advantage of it like I used to—the Island, you've got water all around it. If you like a boat and you love to go in the water, you can go on the side, you can go over there clamming, you can go—you know. Swimming, whatever. And in five minutes, you can be to the ocean. So you can be in the ocean, pretty much—you've got all of it, the waterways, that you can do things, you know. And they've got now the transportation, they've got jet skis, the boats go so fast they can go anywhere they want to—so if you love the water, it's not a bad place to be, you know, for the lighthouse and everything. Well you see people going to the lighthouse, forty, fifty thousand people a year.

EL: It's amazing.

WD: It's almost a million people that go to our festival.

EL: Almost a million?

WD: [laughter] No!

EL: [laughter]

WD: That was a joke.

EL: [laughter] Yeah, I should've got that!

WD: Yeah. You know you've got something else to ask me!

EL: Oh I do, yeah! [laughter] Now what have been the biggest changes to the landscape of Harkers Island?

WD: No trees!

EL: No trees?

WD: There's no trees! The trees have been cut down. Every time they build a house they cut the trees down. And that's what's gonna hurt in hurricanes. Trees protect you in hurricanes. One might fall on your house, but other than that, it keeps the wind down. Here—you've got no trees. I mean, that's what I think is the worst part of it! People, you know, all the time ask me "How much you flood? How much you get flooded?" Well, we was lucky, you know why we didn't get flooded?

EL: No.

WD: You don't know? I'm a-tell you. You know Neuse River, the river that goes up to New Bern and different places? When that hurricane comes and blows a hundred eighty miles an hour, and it blows that water up, it can't come out. It's raining, plus that, it's going right on up and it's going up onto land. The Island, the way the Island's made, water goes around it, and it's just as deep on one side as it is on the other. So it don't come up on it like if it's forced up on it, it kind of goes around it, so we don't—it gets higher than normal, but it doesn't get high like these rivers. You know what I'm saying?

EL: Mm-hmm. Yeah, can you actually talk about, kind of, the changes in hurricanes from Hazel, so that was the worst one—

WD: That was the worst one, we've had some bad ones since then. I mean, real bad hurricanes. And there might be—I was only twelve years old, but it seems like it was the worst one to me, and I have heard a lot of people say—They had one in '33, it was, the old timers talk about, and that was a bad one, real bad one. The girl that used to work with us was older, she said that she remembers that her porch,

it had a swing, and the wind blew that swing up against the ceiling and held it right there. It wouldn't even fall. So that was the '33 Storm.

EL: Oh my gosh.

WD: So that was bad, that was real bad. Lot of people got around it, and, well it killed a lot of cattle and stuff on the beach, in that storm, 1900—I think around 1900 is when my grandfather moved—it was about that time that people were moving. You know one time there they was gonna build a railroad down to the Cape. They had—I've seen plans of it. They had plans, they was gonna put a railroad there. And it was building up and then hurricanes hit, that inlet cut through, and they changed their mind.

EL: So was that in '33?

WD: No, that was, I think that was started before that.

EL: Okay.

WD: '33 was the inlet cut through, I think.

EL: Okay.

WD: You know, finished cutting through the inlet, but before that they had some really bad storms. Killed a lot of cattle, that was over there. Used to have the horse pennings—they still had the pony pennings over there, keep a certain amount of ponies over there. But I remember when they had the ponies on the Core Banks, too. It was right when they go on down to the end over there, and walk, all the way back this way and drive them, and they had a pony penning, just bring 'em to the lighthouse, on that side, over there. I got two horses, when I was little. And I carried one of them back. He kicked me on my leg one time.

EL: [laughter]

WD: But I think it's because I scared him to death. I had him down there to the water plant, I've told you about this before, had that siren down there and that siren you hear all over the Island, put him in that fence and closed him in that gate so he could walk around in that green grass, it had a siren—I mean, you talk about going crazy. He was mainly ill. I carried him back to the Banks. But it's—I don't know. It's not a bad—I wouldn't take nothing for it. That time I went to California I worked there to a big supermarket. And I remember one day I was bagging groceries. And I had mustard in a half a gallon jar, and I dropped that on the floor, busted everywhere—I didn't go to work the next day. I quit! Say "You can't quit!" Yes, I can! I quit! I worked to—when I first went to Daytona, I got the chance to go to work there on a marina. I said, "Man, this is the ideal job. I moved to Florida to a marina—you can't beat that!" And they was sticking [?] piling there, about a hundred and forty degrees, and I worked half a day and I liked to have *died*! I don't know why it don't make them die! I went home, and I said, "I'm not going back!" And my Mama was there at that time, she said "Yes you are, you're gonna go back and get your money!" And I said, "I ain't going back to get no money—I quit!" I didn't go back anymore.

EL: Were you mommicked?

WD: Mommicked? Was I mommicked? Nah, I've never been mommicked. Got to be really bad to be mommicked. Yeah, I've done some hard work. But—I don't know. You know, me—this don't have nothing to do with this stuff right here, but me and Lana have never had a bad argument. We've been married sixty years—I've told you this before, haven't I? You know everything about me!

EL: [laughter]

WD: I can't tell you nothing new! You haven't had nothing new today, have you?

EL: Well, people on the recording want to hear it, and I've heard—I've heard new things today!

WD: [laughter] No, I just, when we start to disagree with something, I just walk away. Thirty minutes later, she's forgot it.

EL: [laughter] Now, I'm interested in the hurricanes.

WD: Okay.

EL: So, you know, you're talking about the trees, and that's the issue with the hurricanes—do you think that when you were growing up, was the damage as bad on the Island and in Down East as it is now after a hurricane?

WD: Most of the damage when I was growing up was on the shore. Things that was on the shore, would get more damage. I don't ever remember our house really getting tore up from a hurricane. I know tide went up to some of 'em, I know one guy said that his house floated, but in my lifetime, I don't really remember one getting tore up, you know? Or maybe there was damage to 'em, but you know, like you do [inaudible]. I probably have—that wind is really bad. I had one building that blowed away. You know now how they're building storage buildings everywhere? I built two out here, hundred and ten foot long, I built them by myself, and, you know, no labor involved, one of them twelve foot tall, one of them nine foot tall, hundred and ten foot long, thirty foot wide, and I had boats under it one night, and a waterspout come through here and picked that up and throw part of it over across the—over the top of a house and the other side on the road. I mean, the boat—never hurt my boats. Throwed that whole building—that hundred and ten foot building—over there.

EL: When was that?

WD: It was when we were living over there, that was about, I don't know, thirty years, twenty-five, thirty years ago? Long time ago. I got out of the storage business real quick! [laughter] That was too much work!

EL: Wow. So in your lifetime has there been that much damage in storms to Harkers Island?

WD: It's damage, but it's not like some of these tornado stuff goes through, not that kind of damage, you know, might be one house, or shingles, mostly shingles and siding. I had that one time here, time it blew—I know when this house here, when it was new, we had a hurricane, kind of a bad hurricane. And they had on the ridge vent, it was a new type of a vent, instead of shingles going over it they had a [?] go under it, it was called a ridge vent, and my son-in-laws and stuff was staying here in that storm, and it blowed that off! And the water blowing right in the house, a brand new house, and we had to line up our blue tarps, and had some on the stairs [?], we had to put them tarps up and run the water down and catch it in five gallon buckets. Blowed that vent right over. I mean it blowed that—the other day it blowed down and it blew some of the siding off. [inaudible]

EL: Now when were all the trees—when did they start to be cut down?

WD: Them trees there—there was some trees over there, years ago, and then they cleaned it up, when they started putting them on the market, and then, it was bushes and stuff for a long time, you know? See how them bushes are growing—well, next to that, on the other side, you'll see—on one time it was all clear, on one time it was all trees there, too. So when they started clearing up, you know, that's when they go over there and start cutting all the trees. The trees still help you in storms, hurricanes. So I think

the right kind of storm—it's just a lot of trees been cut down on the Island. And the back side over there where you are, even that way, it's still getting cut down now, I don't know, off to the west'ard, near you.

EL: So they get cut down when people move in?

WD: Yeah, you know developers

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: they start to buy, selling properties, you know, lots and stuff.

EL: So when you were growing up, were most people who lived here from on?

WD: Did—what now?

EL: Were most people who lived here, were they from the Island?

WD: Yeah, yeah.

EL: And when, now when did it start—

WD: It wasn't that many people, one place to the east'ard end of the Island, before you get to the Point, it's a section in there, a bunch of little houses, kind of on the right hand side, and they always called that "Little Burlington." It was a bunch of people form Burlington, you know where Burlington is? It was a bunch—and they bought land and built them little cottages there. And we always—when we'd read the meters, we'd always call that Little Burlington. So they was long time ago when they started coming.

EL: When was that?

WD: They was there all the time—they've been fifty, sixty years ago, it's been a long time, because they was there when I was reading meters, working for the power company, forty years, so it's been a long time. Added a couple of new ones in there—but it was amazing that every one of them was from that same area. They got it real cheap, I mean, just cottages.

EL: Is that the place next to Barbour's Harbor?

WD: Next to Barbour's Harbor?

EL: The—like, Island Oaks, the one you're talking about?

WD: Island Oaks, the harbor's on this side.

EL: Okay, yeah.

WD: Next to Cape Lookout. Cape Pointe. That's Cape Pointe Marina.

EL: Okay.

WD: Used to be Barbour's.

EL: Okay! I see.

WD: Yeah. Cape Pointe Marina. No, that is further on down.

EL: Okay.

WD: That's all the way—it's just about all the way to the end. Not all the way to the end, but it's a bunch of little houses, you see? Right kind of across the road from Davis Street, and Lewis Street. That little section in there.

EL: Okay. Now when did people really start coming on from off and buying up houses, especially along the waterfront?

WD: When did it start? Well, the past—I'd say the past twenty years is really when it started getting really bad, but before that it'd be one or two would buy something, you know? But in the past ten, fifteen years, it's really—It's not—I don't know if there's a lot that's left on this side of the Island, that's not been sold. It might not be cleared up, but I don't think if any one that's not—that's for sale, really. And now it's everything that's kind of building that way, you know? Yeah, where you're at there [backside of the Island], that's getting built up back there, got people start coming in there—It's not a bad place. I told you about the time there weren't nothing back there and they built, put the barbed wire around it? Oak Hammock? I done some in my day!

EL: Actually, Staci told me that Earl Davis was developing back there at one point?

WD: That was Owen Fulford.

EL: Okay.

WD: That was Owen Fulford, was developing back there. He owned all that. We come real close to buying a piece of land there, on the—are you familiar with Oak Hammock?

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: All the way around, and then it circle back out? Well, you know down near the water? Owen Fulford owned that land, and I come real close at one time of buying some of them lots—he was going to sell me one of them lots for a thousand dollars apiece. On the water, I could take my pick. They didn't have a road there, at that time. And that's about the same time we bought the other, and I took Lana out there one time, showed it to her, she said, "He'll never build that road out there!" You buy that land, and it was only a thousand dollars a lot, then. You don't know what it is, now.

EL: I can't even imagine!

WD: No. But it's—We got us a new bridge, though.

EL: Yeah, what do you think about that?

WD: Got a nice bridge. I wouldn't care if it had a [?] like it used to be ! [laughter] It don't bother me. I [] when I'm older. Come across it. I mean, it's a nice, really, don't get me wrong. But—they built the first bridge, I was born in '42, they built in '41. I think it was '41. I didn't see nothing wrong with that bridge after they patched it up, it was bumpy, but you know, whatever. But I'm sure that everybody likes the bridge, except me. I don't dislike it, and it's kinda pretty, riding up on it, and stuff, you know?

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: I'm not gonna say nothing bad about it. Nothing wrong with it.

EL: That's good.

WD: Nice bridge.

EL: Now kind of, I know—

WD: It's the best bridge that we got!

EL: [laughter] I've asked you a lot about this, but just kind of to sum it up—what would you say were—are the biggest—aside from the trees, the biggest landscape changes to the Island? You know, maybe the marshes, Harkers Point, Shell Point, backside of the Island, kind of all around there, the trees, actually, that's—

WD: Well, you got your developments, like across from the school.

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: At one time, that was the first school house, down there. You know that? Jenny something, Jenny something.

EL: Jenny Bell!

WD: At one time that was woods, big oaks, and that's where we'd go down there and park. It was our parking place, down there. But now it's gone. You can't park! [laughter] But really that's the section, and when you go to the bridge over there, when you're coming on the Island, all that section in there [Harkers Point Subdivision], all that's new houses and stuff, that's a big change from the way it was when I was growing up. It was nothing, none of that was there. And here, on the southern road here, it pretty much is—so many lots, the buildings, individual houses—Like I say there, across from the school, up there, that project there—And also, down there where you're at, probably, and—Bayview Drive, that's just—lot of locals on Bayview Drive, now.

EL: There are a lot of locals?

WD: Most of the locals live on Bayview Drive, or on Cape Lookout. Not a lot of locals left, really, you know? Biggest change? I don't know, I don't know what to say! I mean it's not like there no skyscraper or nothing here, you know, just—Even down there where my father's fish house was. You go down there now, that don't look like my father's fish house. I remember one time down there, my—when you turned down by Fish Hook, and go down that road, all that across the road is where my father's house—that was my whole family that lived there. It was the fish house, my Grandmama owned that next to that, my aunts, my uncle lived next to that, come on back out and my Grandfather had a store, had a store across the road, my Daddy—everything on that side, except one little cemetery over there, was all, when I was growing up. I remember when we'd go down to that Ferry Dock—go down the road there, it was all woods and stuff down there, you know. And the cemetery was there, but it was all the way down—and if a light would be on in the fish house, the only thing on was the light in that fish house. And I wasn't very old, and I'd go down to that fish house, and when we'd get near round that curve like you'd see nothing. And I'd run just as fast as I could have run till I seen that light, get by that cemetery, and then I'd walk. [laughter] It's kind of scary, you know, when I was little. But all that's changed, in there, I mean. That marina? They not even opening—Island—that marine there, no, not this year. That storm tore that building down, I don't know why they're still having problems there, for some reason.

EL: Is that the Island Fishing Center?

WD: Mm-hmm.

EL: Okay,

WD: Yeah, they're not opening that this year. So I guess that might be something to do with that boats got damaged or something, in there. Look like they're still opening that motel, though. That Baba [?], he wants to get rid of that, big time.

EL: And now I think, something Staci mentioned yesterday is the shoreline, how you and your wife always told her, you know, the shoreline changed. Can you talk about, you know, the difference in the beach when you were growing up until now, like, what was the process of it becoming bulkheaded?

WD: Are you talking about the Island's shore?

EL: Mm-hmm.

WD: Before, it was just, the crowd [?] was just washing it away. I remember one guy was talking, the older feller was talking, when I was young, and he was talking about how all out there on the side of my father's fish house, he said he remembers when they played ball out there! So if that's the case, it washed away a *lot,* you know. But one time, there, when the people moved over here, that's where they traveled, down by the shore, it was nothing back here. And then gradually it washed away, and when you build them bulkheads and rocks, I remember the year they did that, they put them so far apart all the way down there, and what that's done, it's helped some, and it's helped save it some, but one side builds up, pretty sure, the other side washes out! Do you notice that? So it's helping and it's not helping some people, depends on which side you live on. But I'm sure it's what helped it some, but.

EL: You said you remember the year that happened?

WD: It was, see, I don't know if it wasn't the 60s. It's been a long time.

EL: Okay.

WD: Yeah, it's been a long time. Probably the 60s. I remember one feller there, old Archie, he was drunk a lot, and he fell one time face down in that rock, those rocks. And he didn't have a place on his face that wasn't skinned. [laughter] He was tore up! He was—everyone thought the world of him, though. Nicest feller that's ever been. And you know Billy's up here? Old Man Billy, they had a store there, had a little room in the back, he would sleep back there like a night watchman, and he parked his car around the back side door, and he come out of there one morning, he got out there, and somebody had stole every—had jacked his car up and stole every tire under it! Him on night watch! [laughter] We made fun of him! He's the one that told me one time that he shot a loon—he shot a duck, with a double barrel? He shot a duck, shot out of the other barrel and hit him in the same place.

EL: [laughter]

WD: That's what he told me!

EL: Now, I won't linger too long on this, but when you went duck hunting, where would you go?

WD: Over to Core Banks, mostly. I went different places, but that's where we went most of the time. Sometimes we would hunt down to Brown's Island, on that side. We didn't go over here to this banks, very much. That's nothing—wasn't good over there as it was in Core Banks. I used to hunt—but it wasn't many people hunted, when I was hunting, there was only like four or five different bunches, so you could go wherever you wanted to, pretty much—now you've got to get a permit, and all that. I would tell you some stories about hunting, but I would be locked up, I tell you.

EL: [laughter] Well, we won't have anything that could incriminate you!

WD: I think I've already told you about most of them.

EL: I think we're having a guest come in, let's see.

WD: Yeah, yeah.

EL: [laughter]

WD: But—[movement to see where customer is going]

EL: Now I think, so I don't hold you too long, I'll ask you—what are your hopes for the younger generation of Harkers Island?

WD: I think he's looking for me. [knocks on window]

EL: [laughter]

WD: Just give me on second.

EL: That's totally fine. I could pause it.

[]

WD: Say it again?

EL: Well you were talking about, [laughter] your hopes for the younger generations of Harkers Island—you were talking about the museum. What's the significance of that?

WD: Well, I mean, the kids and stuff is—if we don't do what we do and try to save this stuff, our kids and grandkids is not going to know, you know, nothing about it, really. So that's I mean, looking out more or less for them. The grandkids. I mean the future, that's what it's all about, the future. That's everything that happened. [?]

EL: What do you hope for the younger generations—that they'll be active with the museum, or what else?

WD: Oh, I hope they will, I hope it just keeps growing and getting better. Yeah. But I'm glad we got it, really—it's really nice. Yep.

EL: Do you have any concerns about the future of Harkers Island?

WD: No, why should I? [laughter] I know that in my family, my grandkids and all are gone—So really, it's not gonna—So really, if you don't have something like this, they're not going to know nothing about it, really, you know. 'Cause they live away—if something happened to us—Even Staci, she don't come here like she used to, you know? I try to talk 'em in to if something happened to us, give 'em this house, got three girls, each of them picks their own apartment, in there.

EL: [laughter]

WD: But—they won't do that.

EL: Now, is there anything else you'd like to add before we go?

WD: [laughter] I don't know! You got me before I was born, so [laughter]

EL: [laughter] Now, I think you said before this interview, something about the validity of everything you say? Can you—can you talk a bit to that?

WD: Oh, about the part—Everything I just said, I'm the biggest liar on the Island, so it might not—you don't want to go too far with it!

EL: [laughter] Well, thank you, again, this is Eva Leasure, with

WD: [laughter] Is that enough?

EL: Yeah, can you say your name one more time?

WD: Say what?

EL: Say your name one more time?

WD: You don't know my name? [laughter]

EL: Just one more time for the recording! [laughter]

WD: This is Wayne Davis, signing off.

EL: Thank you very much!